



Michigan Nurses Association

An Affiliate of National Nurses United

Headquarters
2310 Jolly Oak Road
Okemos, MI 48864
phone: 517.349.5640
fax: 517.349.5818
web: www.minurses.org

Marquette
220 W. Washington Street, Suite 100
Marquette, MI 49855
phone: 906.226.7053
fax: 906.226.2701



June 9, 2015

Dear members of the Senate Education Committee:

As a Registered Nurse at the University of Michigan, I write to you with grave concerns regarding Senate Bill 280's potential impact on patient care.

It is important to note that the ramifications of SB 280 go far beyond the education sector; for example, although UM Hospitals and Health Centers are self-supporting and do not receive money from the state general fund, University of Michigan Health System employees are categorized as public sector workers and would be affected by any change in the law.

These workers include approximately 5,000 RNs who work at UMHS, all represented by the Michigan Nurses Association. We are proud of our contributions to making UMHS one of the nation's leading medical and research institutions.

Much of this success is attributable to UMHS RNs' collaboration with management. RNs are the healthcare professionals who have the most contact with patients, and therefore we have unique and valuable ideas and input to help improve the quality, safety and costs of patient care.

Working together with management, we elevate the care that patients receive on a daily basis and create practices and innovations that improve patient care and make UMHS even stronger.

Our work is built on interest-based problem-solving, or a "mutual gains" approach. This constructive, pro-active system enables nurses and management to work together to identify issues and jointly find solutions.

Our collective bargaining agreement, agreed to by both the employer and the nurses, serves as a framework for RNs to engage in a collaborative relationship with management in this way. The benefits of this arrangement include:

- Improved patient care through nurses' involvement via councils, committees and regular meetings with management.
- Support for continuous learning and professional development for RNs at all points in their career.
- Joint training of management and RNs.
- Savings of time and money, because resolving issues early helps avoid the use of arbitrators or mediators and prevents loss of productivity.

-over-

Part of the framework that makes all this possible is our employer's ability to provide paid "release time" as part of our collective bargaining agreement.

Because we work in a collaborative environment that relies on all parties participating, the employer compensates both management and employees for their time. Allowing the state to prohibit agreements that cover this would create an unfair and counterproductive environment.

Paid release time also makes RNs available during hours that management typically works, which prevents meetings outside regular hours that could be a financial and logistical burden for the system.

For all these reasons, we believe it is essential that UMHS and Registered Nurses continue to have the option of mutually agreeing on a collaborative structure that includes paid release time. We urge you not to allow the state to dismantle this productive system by voting no on SB 280.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance on this issue.

Sincerely,

Katie Oppenheim, RN
Chair, University of Michigan Professional Nurse Council